

PROJECT DIRECTOR'S UPDATE



I am so pleased to announce that we're reaching major milestones to successfully deliver the Connections Project on time and within budget by October 2020. In 2016 after wide community consultation,

the Connections Reset Delivery Plan agreed to prioritise modernisation works based on agreed and well-established principles and with a key focus on areas with channels of higher water loss and higher use. The Connections Project has already undertaken modernisation works across 87% of the GMID's total irrigation channel network, an amazing achievement when the original business case assumed that 40% of landowners would depart from irrigation service.

Some of our key achievements include:

- meeting our water savings target for Stage 1 and reaching more than 98 per cent of our total target
- installing more than 9,000 state-of-the-art meters to for much better accuracy in measuring irrigation flows
- remediating more than 300 km of channel to reduce water seepage and leakage
- signing almost 5,000 legal agreements with landowners.

As modernisation works are nearing completion, the Project team is focussing on connecting landowners to the modernised system, installing pipeline, decommissioning leaky spur channel and delivering individual on-farm works packages across the GMID.

The Project generates water savings by reducing losses in the GMID channel system. These losses include evaporation, seepage and leakage in open channel and meter error and leakage. In general, water savings are based on assessing losses before and after modernisation works. The Victorian Government published a Water Savings Protocol and technical manual for

calculating water savings. The modernisation works are rigorously audited each year to verify that works have been completed and water savings estimates have been calculated consistent with the Protocol's methods.

We are delivering extensive works all-year-round, thanks to many innovative strategies. Works were carried out during our final winter works shutdown period and continued without interrupting supply into the irrigation season, which has now officially kicked off.

This year we will have installed more than 100 km of pipeline and more than 30 regulators, decommissioned over 200 km of channel and treated more than 1,000 outlets.

The Connections Project listened to landowners to develop many new and flexible strategies that allowed works to go ahead throughout the year, with most upgrades during winter months.

GMW also capitalises on the winter shutdown period to maintain significant irrigation assets. Many structures that form key parts of this complex system need ongoing maintenance and smart refurbishment to keep the system running efficiently for our farmers and to protect our valuable water resources.

The Victorian and Australian Governments are investing \$2 billion in the Connections Project to preserve water for productive agriculture in northern Victoria and set our farmers up to face future challenges with smarter on-farm irrigation systems and technology.

Each time that works are completed they become part of the operating infrastructure. Independent research shows that the value of irrigated agriculture in the GMID will increase by \$42 million each year once Stage 2 of the Connections Project is complete. I'd like to thank everyone involved for their patience and support on this extraordinary journey as we turned the ship around. Wishing you all the best for the start of the irrigation season.

Frank Fisseler
Project Director

SAFETY A PRIORITY AROUND OUR WORKS

With construction works occurring year round, we want everyone to be safe around our sites. Each site will have safety, environmental and quality controls and management plans in place. During the winter period, environmental conditions deteriorate so please remember:

- Increased traffic including heavy machinery is on the roads. Please follow the direction of any traffic management or speed directions.
- We undertake on-farm works to reconnect properties back to the modernised

network. Be aware of contractors and machinery on your property and stay away from the site/machinery.

- Pay attention to any warning signs and do not enter a work site without permission from the site supervisor. Fencing and barriers will be in place to protect people from potentially hazardous areas or materials.

If you have questions about a construction site on your property, please contact the site supervisor. You can find their details on the signage at the site entrance.

PROJECT MILESTONE UPDATE



9,200
Meters
installed



309 km
Channels
remediated



1,650 km
Channels
decommissioned



6,610
Landowners fully
modernised



4,800
Legal agreements
signed



378 GL
Audited Water
Savings

Finalising Construction

With the Connections Project on track for completion in October 2020, the team are focussing on efforts to finalise works on properties where landowners have been connected to the modernised irrigation system.

The Project is installing new Goulburn-Murray Water assets to creating efficiencies with the GMW network in parallel with delivering on-farm irrigation arrangements in collaboration with customers.

In some cases this means removing large GMW channels and replacing them with fit for purpose on-farm gravity channels or installing pumped pipe irrigation systems. For some customers it will mean moving to a Domestic & Stock arrangement. Connections Project contractors will also be working on organising easement and installing fencing to suit the new infrastructure, its assets and the farm layout.

This process will help to open up opportunities to close out some of the long running activities and works and move to a more complete stage of the Project.

LOOKING FORWARD TO A FUTURE OF EXPANSION

For Merrigum farmer, Kevin Fitzsimmons, connecting to the Connections Project's state-of-the-art irrigation system has not only meant an improvement in water flow and production on his farm, it also means he is now looking forward to the future expansion of his dairy production.

The works included installing more than 4.3 km of pipeline, with 1030m of channel retained. 100m of the channel was retained by Kevin for use as a sump and one state-of-the-art meter was installed to replace 9 old outdated meters.

As a dairy farmer for the past 40 years, Kevin has been able to work on changing the layout of his farm and regain 20 to 30 acres. He plans to use these for increasing production and is already seeing efficiencies that are helping him move into the future.

“Farming is a lifetime thing for most farmers and we are very happy with what the Connections Project has done”. Mr Fitzsimmons said.

“With the modernisation system in place, we will be so much more efficient and that puts us in a good place to move forward.

“We are in the early stages of putting a pipe and riser system in. We anticipate this will have a massive impact on lessening the evaporation and seepage, and just not having to constantly spray channels, this will provide us with a higher flow rate and importantly it will provide significant water savings and an improved lifestyle.

“Reclaiming our land will happen over time, starting next summer by lasering the decommissioned GMW channel into our farm layout and planting a crop of millet.

“Because of the new system I am now more flexible. I can target new areas and recycled water to any position around the farm going forward, which is a great improvement compared to how we did things prior,” Kevin said.

Connections Project Director Frank Fisseler said he was pleased to see the Project provide long-term benefits for landowners like Mr Fitzsimmons.

“That’s our end-goal – water savings and to create a sustainable future for farmers in our region by providing them with modernised irrigation infrastructure,” Mr Fisseler said.



Merrigum farmer, Kevin Fitzsimmons is looking forward to the future expansion of his dairy production.

Have a question about the Connections Project?

We encourage you to speak to us about questions you may have or if you need any information. We encourage you to speak to your engagement officer in the first instance – you can find their number on our written communication to you.

Please cut out and keep this list of contact details.

Connections Project

(general enquiries)

1300 163 006

connections@gmwater.com.au

Complaints

1300 163 006

(ask to speak to the Complaints and Solutions team)

John Holland

(major contractor delivering works on GMW's behalf)

0438 612 831

enquiries.gmw@jhg.com.au

GMW

(general enquiries)

1800 013 357

(24 hour emergencies)

1800 064 184

Waterline

(GMW water ordering)

1300 469 469



To find out more about the GMW Connections Project

Website connectionsproject.com.au

Call 1300 163 006

Email connections@gmwater.com.au

Visit 55 Welsford Street, Shepparton, VIC

Your local area GMW office to talk to one of your local engagement officers

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